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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 NEW DELHI 002631

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [PGOV](#) [PK](#) [IN](#)

SUBJECT: HISTORIC SRINAGAR-MUZAFFARABAD "PEACE CARAVAN" ROLLS!

REF: A. NEW DELHI 2604

[1](#)B. NEW DELHI 2270

Classified By: A/DCM Geoff Pyatt for Reasons 1.4 (B, D)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: In an act of personal and political courage, the Prime Minister, joined by key cabinet and Congress Party colleagues, travel

[1](#)2. (C) Demonstrating personal and political courage, the Prime Minister, joined by key cabinet and Congress Party colleagues Sonia Gandhi, Braving increasingly explicit terrorist threats in recent days against passengers and the vehicles, including a brazen April 6 suicide attack PM: "Nothing can Stop it"

[1](#)3. (C) Speaking under heavy security protection to a smallish crowd, the PM was gracious, thanking President Musharraf for his leadership i will be first step in growing interaction between India and Pakistan centered around Kashmir, with the LOC becoming increasingly porous and a J&K Chief Minister Mufti Mohammad Saeed called the bus service "the best thing to have happened to Kashmir in 58 years."

MEA: Depends on Pakistan

[1](#)4. (C) In an April 7 meeting, Foreign Secretary Shyam Saran agreed with the Ambassador that the bus was a "dramatic and historic event."

Passengers Drop Out

[1](#)5. (C) Of the 30 passengers originally booked for the 7-8 hour journey, only 19 actually travelled, plus PDP President Mehbooba Mufti Saeed No Serious Incidents

[1](#)6. (C) Despite a sharp increase in the number and nature of terrorist threats against the buses (dubbed "rolling coffins" by the four ter Comment

[1](#)7. (C) The bus service is the most concrete evidence to date of Manmohan Singh's leadership and willingness to take risks for peace. The bus fits in neatly with the PM's vision of borders as increasingly irrelevant in a globalized world, and as a means to reduce their relevance. On the Indian side, it is difficult to overstate the political importance of the bus as a symbol of falling barriers between India and Pakistan